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Practical Pointers for Powerful and Persuasive PowerPoint Presentations

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Title Slide - Practical Pointers for Powerful and Persuasive PowerPoint Presentations

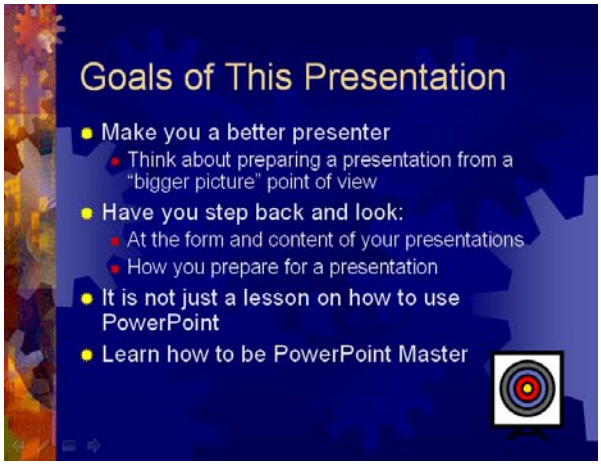
Our topic is putting power into your presentations – whether they be to your clients, your colleagues in your law office or a professional gathering such as this. Our presentation is as much about the communication skills necessary to make successful presentations as it is about the technology of presentations or the tricks of a particular piece of software.

As a practical matter, we shall largely be focusing on Microsoft PowerPoint for a number of reasons:

- It's the software that we both routinely run;
- It seems to be more popular than its Corel competitor;
- It's part of the normal suite of applications in Microsoft Office, and is indeed with (Excel) among the best products within that suite;
- But we will refer to other presentation software from time to time.

Slide 1 – Our Goals in This Presentation

Our goal today is to make you think about your own presentations, and how you prepare for your presentations. As much as focusing on the nuts and bolts of PowerPoint use, we want to encourage you to look at the bigger picture. Many of you will have used PowerPoint, and be familiar with how easy it is to assemble a deck. We invite you, however, to step back a little and think about the form and content of your presentations, and how you prepare for a presentation.



It is not a lesson on how to use PowerPoint, although many of the points that we will touch on today will talk about how you can better use PowerPoint to make presentations whether it's to clients or in court, etc. Indeed many of the points today are equally applicable to any presentation you do with or without PowerPoint.

For those in the audience who are experienced PowerPoint users, we hope to give you at least some tips that will help you be a PowerPoint master.

We shall also be referring to some of the serious critiques that have been made, by Professor Edward Tufte and others, about the misuse of PowerPoint. We have as little tolerance as anyone else for PowerPoint presentations which are badly assembled, boring, or even mendacious. At places in our presentation, we will highlight the lessons we draw from the critics. At all times, we would insist that PowerPoint is a tool, not a message, and that you are the star of the show – and anything which gets in the way of your message should be view sceptically.

The Worst PowerPoint Sins

The Mistakes Most PowerPoint Users Make

Last year, we came across the extremely useful website of Dave Paradi, who styles himself the PowerPoint Lifeguard. He conducted a survey of 160 communications specialists to discover what they found most irritating when watching PowerPoint presentations.

If you take nothing else from this presentation, avoiding Paradi's 12 basic errors would improve anyone's PowerPoint.

Reading Slides Verbatim

The leading irritant was speakers who read the bullet points verbatim, or who didn't realize that the audience could read faster than the speaker could enunciate the points chosen.

The Illegible Deck

The second significant error was text that was so small that it couldn't be read from the back of the room, or text that was so dense that it was difficult for the audience to comprehend the point being made.

Wordy Slides

Wordy bullets were the next irritant. Speakers who insisted on using complete sentences, which went on for a number of lines, as opposed to bullet points.

Fade to Black

The next irritant were slides that were too hard to see because of the colour choice. This can particularly be a problem if a speaker has adopted a particular slide presentation design (perhaps a corporate design) and when the deck is displayed in the room, the slides become extremely difficult to read. This can especially be a problem when the ambient light is saturating the screen. Under such circumstances, savvy speakers learn how to change the master template a stroke.

Multimedia Overload

The next two irritants related to multi-media. Speakers who overdo the possible acrobatics of flying text or flying graphics, to the point where the movement becomes an irritant, rather than a feature. Secondly, annoying use of sounds. Simon Chester recalls one ABA Annual Meeting, shortly after PowerPoint had been modified to permit sounds to be played, being on a panel with a senior corporate executive, whose sounds were initially incomprehensible, then so loud they were distorted and eventually drowned out some of his most important points. Generally, we only use sounds very lightly, as an occasional joke to wake up an audience.

Overly complex diagrams or charts

Later on in the presentation, we review the work of Professor Tufte, who focuses on how to present complex statistical ideas using graphics. All too often, speakers do not think through how to use statistics to advance comprehension, and thus end up with diagrams so complex that they defy easy comprehension. Speakers should understand that if a slide takes more than 5 seconds to take in, it is likely too dense.

Confused Messages

The next two items relate to structure. The first bugbear was that there was no flow of ideas and the speaker jumped around too much. This is a function of not planning the presentation, or using an outline. The next sin is similar. Namely, that there was no clear purpose to the presentation. This can also be a hazard of using the canned outlines of standard presentations that PowerPoint offers.

Overdoing Design

The next two errors are a function of the plethora of choice which PowerPoint can provide – namely, using too many fonts in a presentation, so that the design of the typeface interferes with the communication of the idea. Secondly, graphic images that did not fit the topic of the slide. Older versions of PowerPoint contained a feature which would suggest possible images, on the basis of words used during the presentation. Needless to say, some of those ideas can be wildly inappropriate in practice.

Bad Video

The final item was poor quality video or audio segments. If you can't use them professionally, don't bother.

The Bottom Line

Taken together, Paradi showed that fully 40% of all presentations (in the eyes of his communications specialist judges) suffered from at least one of these basic errors.

So there are dangers. Getting over them.

The challenge is, thus, to understand enough about the features of PowerPoint to use it to enhance the message, rather than getting in the way of effective communication. In the latter part of these materials, we hope to give you practical tips to become better.

Indeed, we would suggest that every speaker ask himself or herself whether the message will, in fact, be advanced before this audience, using this technology. For the right audience, the right speaker and the right theme, it can invaluable. Audiences can get more out of the presentation, and have

been shown to recall more of what they have experienced. But that means – doing it right. And it's all too easy to perpetuate PowerPoint junk.

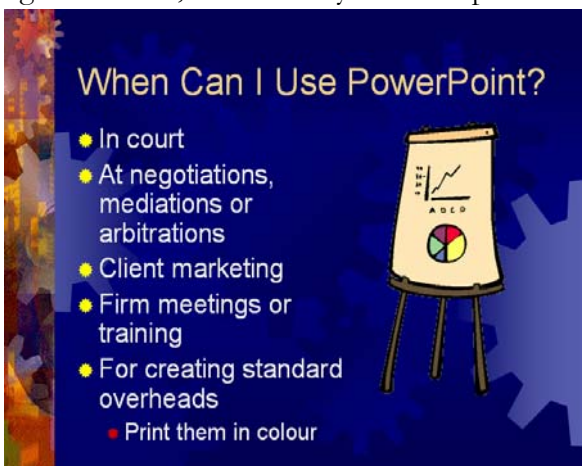
Slide 2 – When Can I Use PowerPoint?

When should you consider using PowerPoint? Many lawyers, of course, think about using it in the courtroom, and while there are some using it there, that is probably, at the present at least, one of the more limited areas of its use. You should consider using it at negotiations, mediations or arbitrations. Judges and tribunals are more receptive now than they once were to the use of visual aids, but you should at all times satisfy yourself that your argument and presentation will be advanced by the use of visual aids, and that it will not constitute a distraction from your advocacy.

It is a fabulous tool to help you communicate or get a certain message across, or help you make a certain point.

This means thinking about your case or your position, and whether the logic of your argument lends itself to the sort of analytic structure that PowerPoint delivers.

Probably, the greatest potential use for most lawyers is using it for client marketing purposes. It's a fabulous way again to communicate a particular message to a client, and indeed you can impress upon a client your advanced technical abilities by showing them your ability to use this program. Don't forget to consider using it for meetings or presentations trainings within your firm for lawyers or other staff. Lastly, if you are needing or wanted to do a traditional overhead presentation with acetates, consider using PowerPoint to create those acetates. You can then take them to a commercial printer and have them printed off and have very professional looking overhead acetates. You should even consider, if appropriate, doing up colour acetates. This is a way to make your traditional overhead presentation look very professional.



Bear in mind that PowerPoint has its critics, and that some judges may be hostile. Bad PowerPoint can be soporific. Bad PowerPoint will not make a poorly thought out presentation any stronger.

Indeed, PowerPoint has been blamed for:

- Dumbing down business decisions (Scott McNally allegedly banned the software from Sun),
- Obscuring scientific and political decision making (some have argued that the Challenger disaster happened because the scientific evidence on the ring-seal was dumbed down to fit into PowerPoint; and Bob Woodward's book 'Plan of Attack' notes the extensive use of PowerPoint in pre-war White House briefings) and
- Misleading audiences about complex topics (by typographic designers – Edward Tufte has an eloquent book of criticism on the PowerPoint mentality).

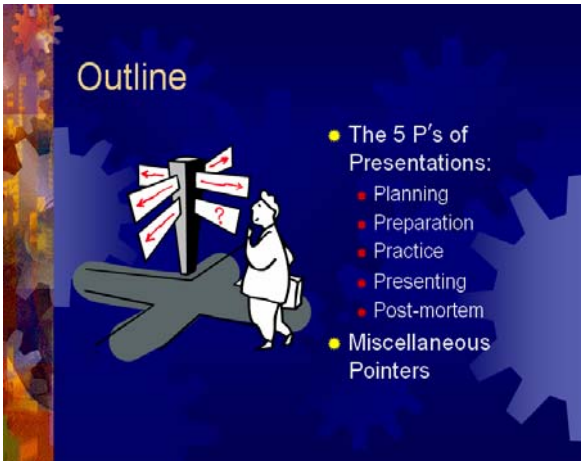
We can see some validity to the critics' complaints, having sat through mindless PowerPoint presentations ourselves. The trick is to ensure your PowerPoint advances your presentation, instead of getting in the way.

Remember – you are the star; not the software.

Slide 3 - Outline

We shall be focusing on the five Ps of presentations.

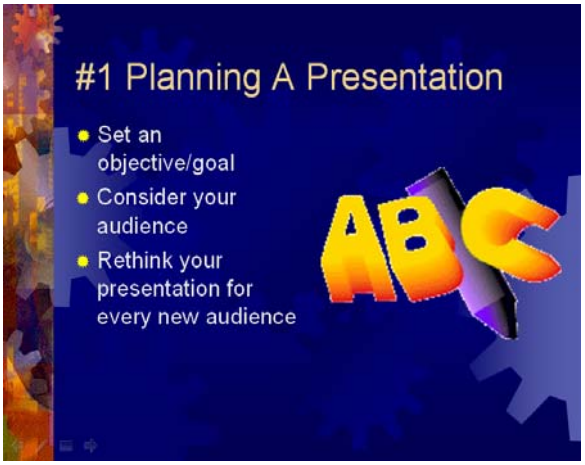
1. Planning
2. Preparation
3. Practice
4. Presenting
5. Post Mortem



We will be reviewing each of these points in detail and at the end of the presentation, will review some of the miscellaneous pointers that should help you deal with doing some of your presentations.

Slide 4 – The First P - Planning A Presentation

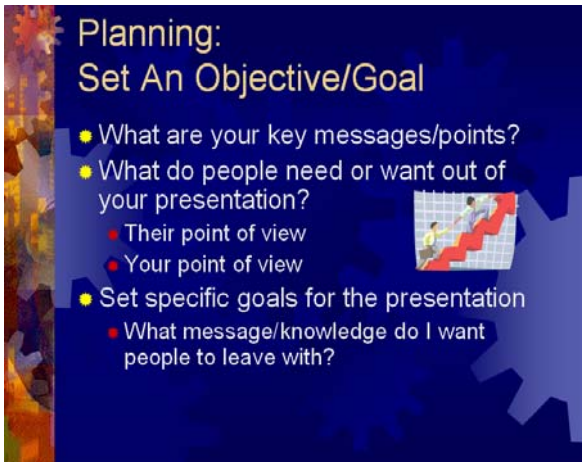
First up, the first "P" – Planning your Presentation



There are two points here to be dealt with. First of all, set an objective or goal for the presentation. You may be acting as an advocate, trying to convince someone of your position; or your goal may be more modest, just to inform or pass on information; or you may simply be there to entertain. These goals will shape the presentation and drive your preparation. Finally, consider your audience in your planning efforts. You must connect with your audience; if you do not - however dazzling your graphics or dramatic your rhetoric - you will have failed.

Slide 5 – Planning: Set An Objective/Goal

In setting up an objective or goal, you should sit down and clearly identify what are your key messages and key points. Think about what the people attending the presentation need or want from it. Consider both their point of view and your point of view, there may be some overlap and there may be some differences. It is important that you understand where there is a common message and where there is a different message that you either want to tailor to suit their needs or tailor to ensure that your key message comes across. In setting an objective or goal, the key point is



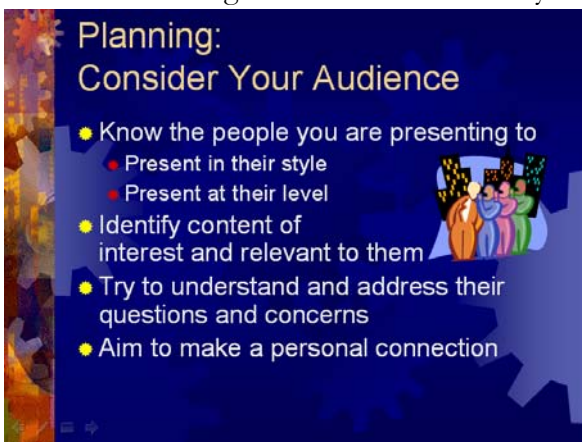
making sure that you very clearly know and understand the message that you want to get across to the people you are presenting to, and the knowledge that you want them to leave with.

Your objective will also be bound up with your audience and their needs. Will your ideas benefit them, or solve a problem – think through your goals in the light of your audience's needs

Slide 6 – Planning: Consider Your Audience

Moving on to that and springing on to setting your goals and determining the message you want to deliver, you should very carefully consider who is in your audience. You should know the people you are presenting to. Their needs drive everything you do.

If you are talking to a group of strangers, probe your contacts at the organization which invited you. Is this a general audience, or a group of specialists? What is their background? What has brought them together? Get a sense of age and gender breakdown. Are there any "hot-button" topics you should avoid.

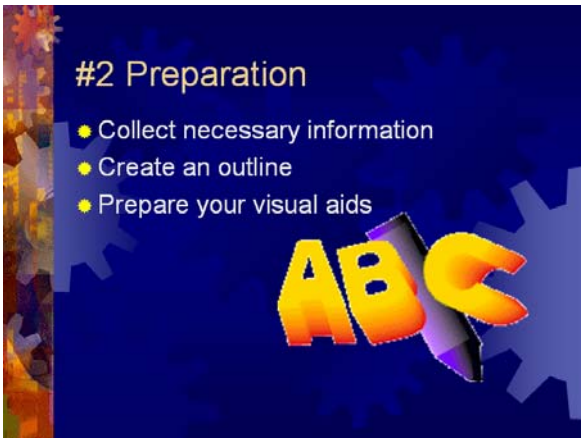


Arrive a few minutes early and strike up a conversation with some members of the audience. Are there specific concerns they would like to hear about. What could they learn that would really justify their attendance? Think about what they could take away from your speech or presentation. If necessary, rearrange your dick accordingly.

If you are presenting to a court or tribunal, many of the same lessons apply. Find out as much as you can about the panel, and how to engage them. And remember judges may have "hot buttons" too. On page 26, we discuss the law of PowerPoint, such as it is.

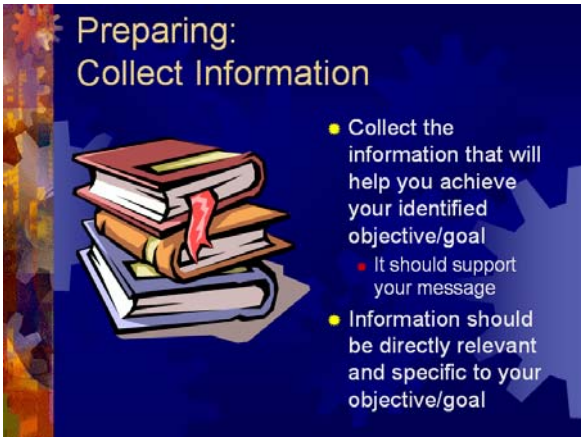
But back to a more generic audience. Present to them in their style, present to them at their level. If you've got a legal crowd, then you can present and use legal terms or a vocabulary that they will all understand. If it's a non-legal crowd, you should avoid using legal terms. Another example would be a very technical crowd. If it is a very technical crowd, you can use technical terms and get into complex themes or definitions. If it's a non-technical crowd, you should keep things relatively basic. Identify the content that will be of interest and relevant to the people in the audience. There is nothing worse than a presentation to a group of people that is either not in their style or presented at a different level or it's just information that they are not interested in. In particular, put yourself in their shoes. Try to understand and address their questions and their concerns. Answer them in the presentation as opposed to having to face them afterwards in the question period and address

things that you probably should have in or through the presentation. Aim to make a personal connection with each and every individual in the audience.



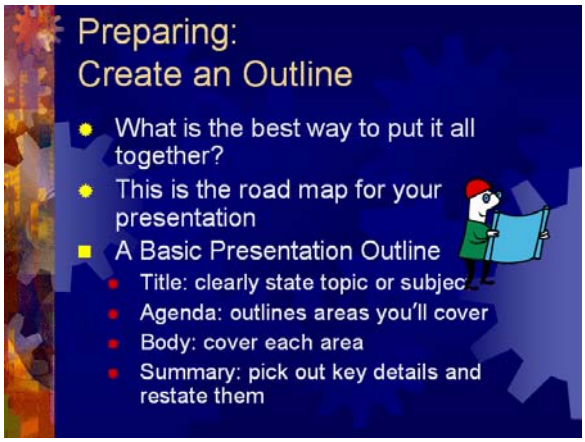
Slide 7 – The Second P - Preparation

The second P is preparation. There are three points to consider here. First of all, collecting the information that's necessary to put your presentation together, to deliver the message you want to deliver. Secondly, considering that information and creating an outline of the presentation. How do you want to get that message or information across to your audience. Lastly, prepare your visual aids. That's the tool that delivers your message that gets your key points across.



Slide 8 – Preparing: Collect Information

In terms of collecting information, remember to go back to the start. What was your identified objective or goal. Collect the information that will help you achieve that goal and support the message you want to get across to everybody. Every piece of information you should consider and make sure it is directly relevant and specific to your objective and goal of getting your message across to people. If it is not directly relevant, you shouldn't include it in the presentation. Like other sorts of communication, making a successful presentation can often be about editing and stripping back detail that obscures your message.



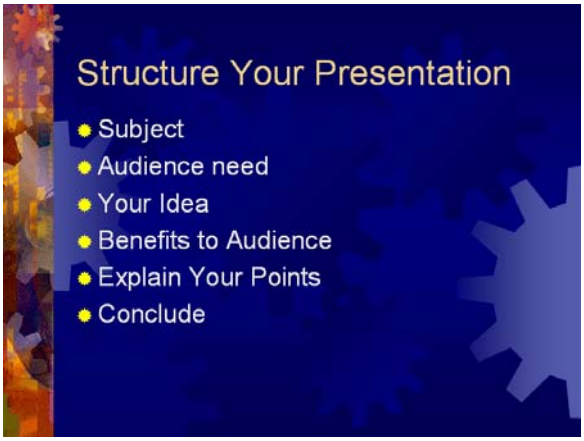
Slide 9 – Preparing: Create an Outline

Once you have your information together, you want to create an outline for the presentation. What is the best way to assemble the information and put it together. Essentially, what is the roadmap for your presentation. A basic presentation outline should have the following four things: First of all, the title. It should be clear and state the topic or the subject of the presentation. Somebody reading the title should instantly know what the presentation is about.

Slide 10 – Structure Your Presentation

Secondly, early on in the presentation, the second or third slide, you should have an agenda slide. It outlines the areas that you will cover through the course of the presentation. Microsoft PowerPoint will help you expand that agenda into slides, which you can then flesh out in detail.

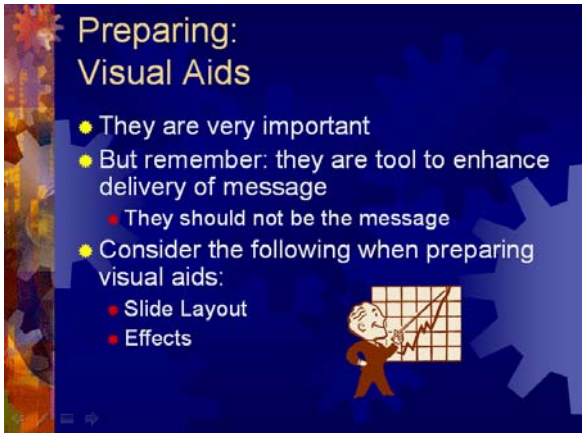
There should be somewhere between 3 to 6 areas that you cover, then of course, you get into the body of the presentation. That's where you go through each of the areas that you identified on your agenda. When you start each section within the body, have an opening slide that makes it clear to the audience that you're moving on to the next area that you're moving through. If you want, you can have an individual or small summary at the end of each of those areas as you move through them. Lastly, at the end of your presentation, you should have a summary. It should pick out the clear and key details from your presentation. Restate them, reemphasize them, let the audience takes those points away with them when they leave you.



We are in two minds about using PowerPoint's pre-canned presentation templates. The danger is that the structure may constrict you and possibly bore the audience. Neither of us has used them in years, and we cannot imagine any situation where a lawyer won't be further ahead with an outline that focuses on the task at hand. Where they may come in useful is in acting as a reminder that you should cover all bases.

Slide 11– Preparing: Visual Aids

Once you have the outline done, you then want to prepare and create your visual aids. They are very, very important. That is the vehicle or the tool by which you deliver the message to the people in your audience. But remember, it is tool to enhance the delivery of your message; your visual aid should not become the message itself. Graphics will enhance a good presentation – but they will not rescue a poor presentation.



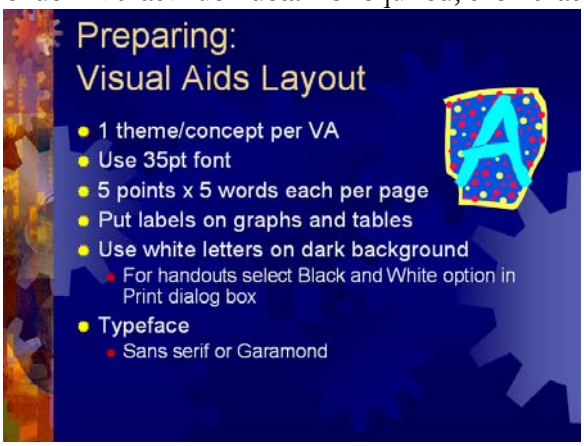
When you are preparing your visual aids, there are a number of things that you should consider, both in terms of slide layout and effects. We will review each of those in more detail.

Slide 12 – Preparing: Visual Aids Layout

First of all, in terms of slide layout, you should only have one theme or concept for each slide in your presentation. So that it is very visible to someone in the back of the room, you should use at least a 35-point font. Try only to have five points per slide, and each of those points should be about five words long.

This is something that lawyers have a great deal of difficulty with, because many lawyers will want to make sure that every point is up there in full and every exception is up there in full and all the angles are covered off. That's a mistake.

People don't have time to read 150 or 200 words on a slide. If that much detail is required, then that detail should be in the handout.



Your slide should be relatively brief and have the basic pointers. You can talk over and provide more detail in your presentation or provide more detail in your handout.

Don't have so many slides that you rush through breathlessly. For one thing, your message will be lost, if the audience is struggling to catch up. Secondly, having 80 or 100 slides for an average 30 minute presentation should be a signal to you that you are trying to tackle too much.

We'll talk later about rehearsal, but one thing that rehearsal will do is show you if in fact you have prepared a 90 minute PowerPoint presentation for a 35 minute slot.

There is a style-checker in the Tools bar of PowerPoint, which will help you be consistent in terms of initial capitalization, end punctuation and overly dense slides. But the tool also has a disconcerting habit of lowercasing every word except the initial word – and you don't want to have a slide that says "ontario business corporations act" or "queen's park".

Make sure you put labels on any graphs or tables within your presentation. That will aid your audience in understanding both the content in the graph or table when they are looking at them during the presentation and when they are looking at them afterwards.

Nothing is more boring than having twenty slides that all like alike: long battalions of bullets, page after page. Vary your slide design every three or four slides, to give audience eyes a break. You'll see in our slides that we use a graphic at the left of the slide and then move a graphic to the right.

A very important sentence may merit a slide all on its own.

Lastly, to make sure you get the best visibility, ideally, you should use white letters on a dark background. Just make sure, especially when using an older projector, that you get the maximum contrast and that the text on your screen is as visible as it can be. Remember that people are used to reading dark or black letters on a white background, so when printing out your handouts, remember to select the black and white option in the print dialogue box. That will make your handouts look like standard printed text on white paper, notwithstanding that your presentation itself has a dark background.

Slide – Preparing: Visual Aids Layout (dark on light)

Just to give you an idea of what some of the other background combinations look like, the one that's probably most commonly used is this type of contrast where it's dark letters on a light or a white background. Certainly this is usually quite visible on a computer screen, but on a projector, and in

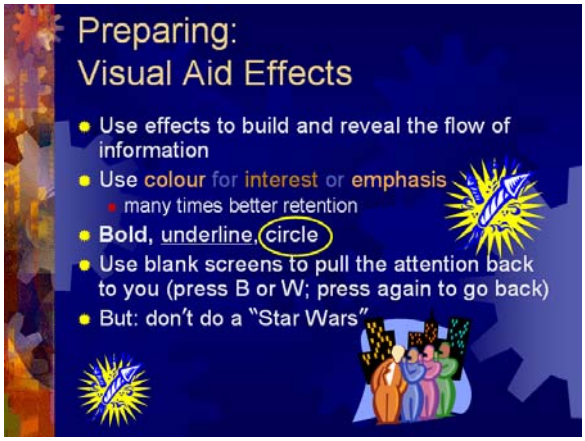
particular with older projectors, the contrast between the dark letters and the light background may not be that great.

Slide – Preparing: Visual Aids Layout (dark on dark)

Moving on to the next example, of course, dark text on a dark background, this may be readable on a computer screen, but most often it is not readable when projected up on a screen. We're sure everyone here has been to a presentation where this kind of contrast has been used.

Slide - Preparing Visual Aids Layout (light on light)

Lastly, another no-no as well is using light letters on a light background. This is equally difficult to read with most projectors.



Slide 13 – Preparing: Visual Aid Effects

Moving on to effects. As PowerPoint and other presentation programs have evolved, they now include all sorts of fancy visual aid effects for having letters, sentences, points and words fly in from all directions, sides, points and angles, with all sorts of graphics and sounds. Some visual aid effects are very helpful in terms of getting your message across. For example, use effects to build and reveal the flow of information on a slide. If you put up 3, 4, or 5 points on a slide, your audience is going to read ahead of you. If you want to keep them in tune and just let them think about one point at a time as you reveal them, use the effects that let you bring in points one at a time as we've done on this slide. It's a good way to move people through a number of points.

But don't have everything sliding out using identical build features. Firstly, the repetition will make it boring. Secondly, you may find that on some slides your content is sufficiently lean that you will have spoken everything that you want to on a particular slide before the build actually completes.

For example, if you are stating that eight states have adopted a particular legal position, then you'll find yourself with dead air unless you have content for each of those eight states. If the point is, however, simply to indicate which the eight states are, put them on the screen all at once.

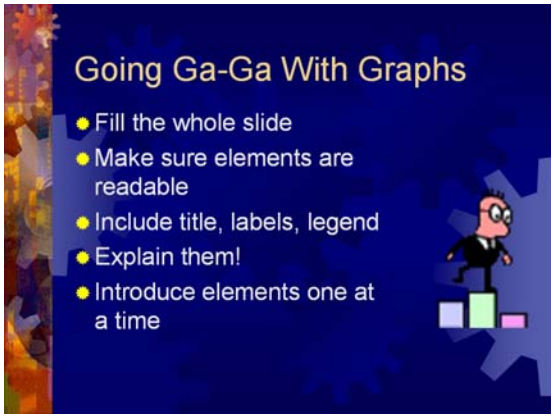
Where builds can be really effective is if you are using charts or tables, which may be rich in information. In that case, building the data one column at a time (or one pie slice at a time) will give you the opportunity to explain to the audience what the significance of any particular figure is.

You can use colour for interest or emphasis. Studies have repeatedly shown that when colour is used, it can help with better retention rates in terms of people remember what was presented to them, in fact you can improve retention rates many times over. Of course, now you can use bold, underline and even circles around selected text or items on a PowerPoint slide. Again, that will serve to highlight those individual words, terms or points. It is neat to really emphasize a point by first putting it up on a slide without a circle, and then on the next slide, having the same text and

putting a circle around the text on that slide so when you move from one slide to the next, the circle appears over the text.

If you have to quote a large block of text, for example a section of a statute, consider showing it as a block, then copy the entire slide into a second slide (no transitions), but change key words in the block into a different brighter colour, so that the key dozen words in a statutory section stand out.

Of course, as an audience is sitting there watching your presentation, their attention will largely be on the screen. One really powerful way to pull the attention back to yourself is to press "B" or "W" respectively to turn the screen to black or white. That blanks the screen out and the of course the audience will then focus on you, and at that point you can either emphasize or walk them through something that is particularly important or that you particularly want to give a high emphasis to. Simply pressing the "B" or the "W" again will take you back to the presentation.



Slide 14 – Going Ga-Ga With Graphs

Just as the old saying goes, that a picture is worth a thousand words, in similar fashion, a graph is an excellent tool for summarizing and communicating numerical information. In most cases a graph will preferable over a simple table of figures. Graphs can be dangerous though. It is very easy to use them in a manner that will prevent your message from being communicated. Here are some pointers to make sure your graphs make an impression on your audience.

It is critical to make sure that all the elements in the graph are readable. Make the graph as large as possible on your slide. All the points made above about using contrasting colours apply equally to graphs. Be real careful here - the colours in graphs projected on a screen will look very different from those on your computer screen.

The graph should stand entirely on its own in terms of explaining what is shown. Include a title and axis labels, and a legend if necessary. The title should clearly and succinctly describe what is presented in the graph. Units of measure and time periods should be clearly indicated as well. If necessary, include a table of the data presented in the graph in a separate slide, or in handout materials.

Lastly, in your presentation, make sure you clearly and carefully explain the information in your graph. Explain everything. Remember that some members of your audience may not be adept at understanding information presented to them in graphical form. If you have a very complex graph, introduce the information on it in stages. Explain what you are showing as you add each element..

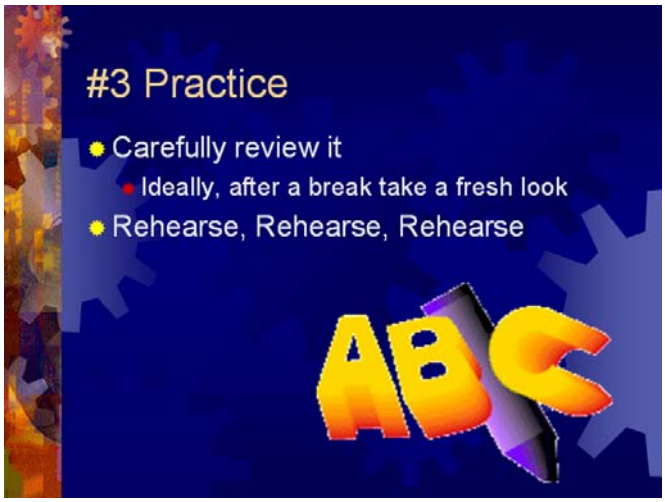
While colour graphs look much better on the screen, take care to make sure that the handouts are also readable, especially if your handouts are in black and white. Pay attention to the readability of the graphs in the handouts. Handouts with 3 slides per page can make graphs very tiny and unreadable.

This becomes critically important if you are using PowerPoint charts in court or before an arbitral tribunal. Courts will react negatively if they feel that you are attempting to distort or mislead them with your evidence. Tufte's books listed on page 24 have good practical advice on how to avoid generating Chartjunk, or lying with statistics using charts. One common mistake made is in converting linear data into 2 dimensional or 3 dimensional graphs, which will cause logarithmic distortions of data relationships.

Slide 15 - Be Master of Your Slides

All these visual effects are great for emphasizing content and emphasizing your key points. It is, however, important not to go overboard. Don't do, as we would call it, a "Star Wars". We remember an American Bar Association speaker at an Annual Meeting in Chicago who inserted loud sound effects into a presentation to such an extent that it sounded like a cartoon sound track. When he actually found himself in front of a stodgy audience of business executives, he was embarrassed that he had forgotten how to turn them off – so one tip, memorize the sequence of keystrokes that will mute your notebook.

Too much effects, too much sound or graphics or text flying in from all angles distracts the audience. It will prevent them from really focussing in your message or content. You definitely, don't want to do a "Star Wars".



For example, you wouldn't want to do something along the lines of our Chicago friend, whose speech was memorable for all the wrong reasons. Don't let PowerPoint detract from the delivery of your message.

Slide 16 – The Third P - Practice

Moving on to the third P in doing presentations….Practice. This is together, probably the most important of the steps because this is where you really craft and hone and improve your message.

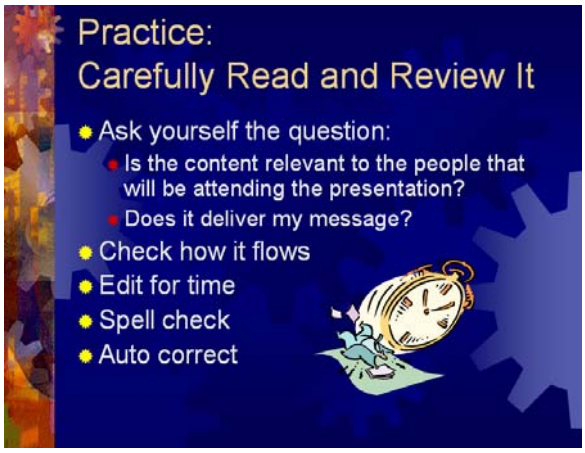
First of all, after you have created your visual aids, carefully review them. Go through them, and make sure your key messages and objectives are met. Go back to your very starting point. Look at the content carefully.

Ideally, if you have the time, take a break and come back and take a fresh look at things. You will see things you may not have seen if you work at something right through, and of course, practice makes perfect….rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.

Let's go into these points in a little more detail.

Slide 17 – Practice: Carefully Read and Review Your Deck

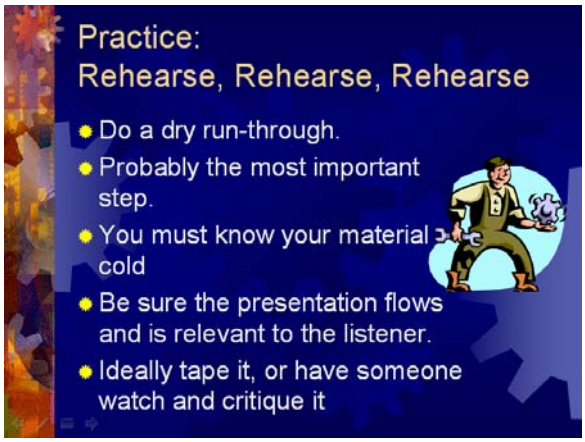
In terms of carefully reading and reviewing your presentation, ask yourself the question, "Is the content relevant to the people that will be attending the presentation? Does it deliver my message to them?" As you are going through it, check how it flows. Make sure the logic is tight, make sure the points come out in the right order.



One tip, view your deck in slide sorter view, which you can find in the small boxes icon, down at screen bottom left. You can easily drag and drop slides into a different order. Holding down the control key while you mouse-click your selections will permit you to move a block or sequence of slides around.

Be sure that you read your presentation for spelling – do not trust the spellchecker. Your credibility will be shot, if you have a major typo. Be particularly careful on client names. And remember the easily mistaken couplets – counsel/council, principal/principle, license/licence.

Lastly, edit the deck for time. Read through, in real time, and make sure it fits within your allotted time slot. In terms of doing a practice or dry run through, there's absolutely no better way to improve the quality of your presentation.



We confess that flying cross-country to give speeches, we constantly review the deck to ensure that the structure is as tight as we want it. Those revisions, even though done dangerously late do serve to freshen the presentation and remind us of what we want to say.

Slide 18 – Practice: Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse

Do one if not more dry run throughs. This again is probably the most important step. You must ensure that you know your material cold. Make sure you know all your points and that you can recite them off the top of your head without pausing.

Make sure again that the presentation flows and is relevant to the listener. Ideally what you should do is tape it or even videotape it, or have someone watch it and provide a critique for you, giving suggestions on what can be done to improve the content or improve the flow in order to make the presentation better.

Slide 19 – High Risks

We know from experience that Murphy's Law rules at the podium. So don't take any risks. You should be well enough prepared that even with a power cut or bulb failure, you have thought through the flow of your presentation so well that you'll be spectacular even without the technology.

Even so, there are certain risks that we have learned about from bitter experience. Unless you are certain that you have proven and reliable high speed Internet access, don't try a live web demo. We have faced all the error messages that Internet Explorer provides. If you have to show the web, consider:

Using a specialized programme like Camtasia

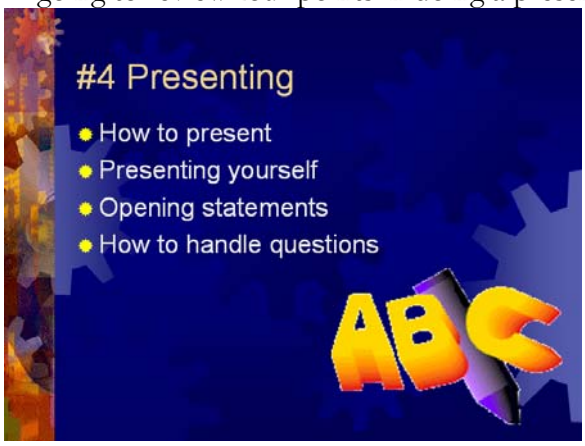
Capture the website onto your hard-drive using Adobe Acrobat Professional's Web Capture tool.

If you must use the web, run through your sequence in advance, so that the websites will still have some presence in cache.

Try to avoid using PowerPoint "Pack-and-Go", unless you have a spare back up of the presentation to recover, if something goes wrong. In earlier versions of PowerPoint, this feature reduced every chart and graphic to a diagonal cross.

Slide 20 – The Fourth P - Presenting

Now that we're done with the planning and preparing, let's get set to do the presentation itself. I'm going to review four points in doing a presentation here. First of all, how you do a presentation. Secondly, presenting yourself. Thirdly, doing an opening statement. Lastly, how to handle questions.



Slide 21 – Presenting: How to Present

First of all, how do you present? You should try to make individual contact with the members of the audience. Make eye contact with individuals in the audience as you are going through the presentation. Scan the whole room, and in particular, remember the people in the front row and the front corners. As you are moving around the audience, try to connect with each individual with each point you make.

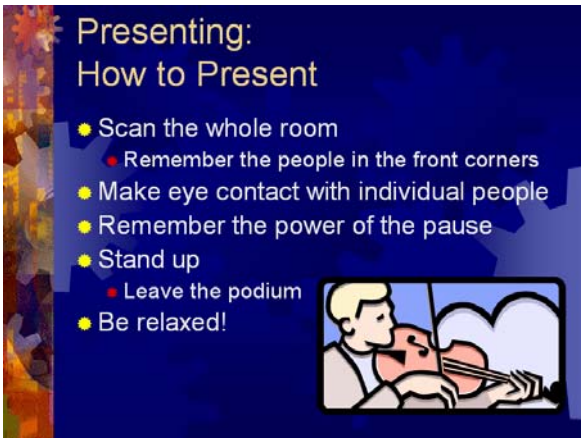
As you scan the whole room, remember the power of the pause. If you want to emphasize a point, if you want to make or give the opportunity for the audience to digest a point, slowing down and pausing for a second, lets them review and consider the information that they have just be provided with.

Most speakers don't realize that you can in fact pause for three or four seconds for emphasis.

Pace yourself – don't try and accelerate so that you garble your speech – if you find yourself running out of time, then just drop entire slides, to get back on track. Don't rush your ending.

A few tips – even a professional speaker will find 250 words in a minute a lot. Better to have fewer words, and put them across with conviction. For a thirty-minute speech, you should have 15 or at the most 20 slides with content.

Because getting through a slide with just a heading, with 5 or 6 lines of subpoints will take 3 or 4 minutes, and more if the content is technical or difficult.



Lastly, try and be relaxed. There is nothing that comes across worth than a presenter that gets up in front of an audience and is not relaxed. That is something that the audience is going to pick up on right away, and it's something that is going to distract the audience from understanding and paying attention to your important message. So remember you are in the spotlight, and you can have fun.

Slide 22 – Presenting; Presenting Yourself

In terms of presenting yourself, remember that your presentation is one thing, the message that you want to get across, you are a huge part of that message. You should make sure that you present yourself properly. Use appropriate language and dress appropriately for the audience. If a suit is appropriate, you should wear a suit, if something less formal is appropriate, wear something less formal.

Good vocal quality is important, vary your voice and your cadence throughout your presentation. Doing something in monotone is a great way to distract and bore people.

Good posture is very important. Stand upright before your audience. If you are sitting at a table your diaphragm will be compressed and you won't be able to project your voice or use your entire body to speak.

Ideally, you should use some gestures and movement, not too much. Play it by ear. What are you comfortable with, what is your personality, what will the audience be comfortable with?

Doing a lecture from behind a podium can sometimes distance you from the audience. If you have an opportunity, come around from behind the podium and stand in front of it, even stand on the floor near the front row of the audience, that is a much better way to get closer to your audience and try to connect with them. Obviously that works with smaller groups only. As the room gets larger, you want to make sure you are able to project your voice so that everyone can easily hear you.

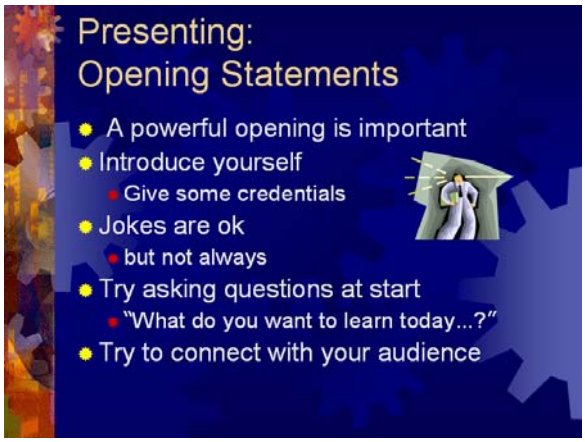
If your occasion permits step away from your notes. Remember that an effective jury address becomes even better when you are closer to the jury. In a room like this, if you can get a wireless lapel microphone (sometimes known as a Lavaliere microphone), you can even go into the audience, which can have a dramatic effect.

Neither of us particularly like stick microphones, which we feel make us look like talk show hosts or saloon singers. Since we will need to advance the slides on our deck, we prefer to have our hands free, so use a wireless remote.

Lastly, use varied facial expressions. There is an incredible amount that comes across in facial expressions. Make sure that you engage people with friendly expressions. Talk to individuals in the audience not to a blur – but shift your attention around the room.

Slide 23 – Presenting: Opening Statements

A powerful opening statement is a very important. It's how you introduce yourself to the audience; it's how you take control of that audience. Make sure you introduce yourself. Give your full name and who you work for.

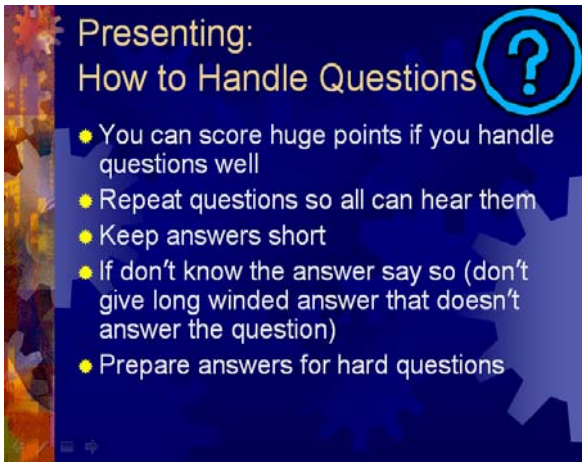


To try and give yourself some authority and establish some credentials with the audience, give some background about yourself, why you have the expertise or the knowledge or the information that's important to them.

Jokes of course, are how many people open a presentation. They are more than O.K. provided they are delivered in an appropriate way and that they come across as humorous in the manner that they are delivered. In some instances, jokes may not be appropriate, and you should not always feel obliged to use a joke. Hopeless joke tellers shouldn't start off by showing their weaknesses. You needn't always be a stand-up comedian – although we have one friend who became a wonderful presenter by taking an amateur course run by Second City.

One interesting way to connect with an audience is start by asking them a question such as "What do you want to learn today?" That will let them feel like they are participating, it will help you focus in on the points you should be delivering to them and later on as you are going through your presentation, you can craft your point and indicate that you are responding to one of the points that

was raised in a question at the start. Again, remember that an audience consists of individuals with different needs and concerns.



Slide 24 – How to Handle Questions

Next up, handling questions. This is probably the thing that scares the most people. How do you handle questions? Many presenters have difficulty with questions, they can be awkward. You can score huge points with the audience if you handle questions well. With a little bit of work, it's not that difficult to do. First of all, you should always remember to repeat questions that are asked of you because there will be people in the audience that will not have heard the question being asked. This will make sure that everyone in the audience hears the question. You'll notice that when politicians do this, they often rephrase the question or turn it around to be a question they do want to answer. Provided that you don't abuse this trick it can be useful – it's unusual to get cross-examined by an audience member, outside a Stump the Experts panel.

When answering a question, you should keep your answers short. Cut to the point. Make sure the key issue or question raised is answered. If you don't know the answer, simply say so. Don't give a long-winded answer that doesn't address the question. That frustrates the person that asks the question, and it makes you look bad in front of the audience.

Lastly, in many situations, you will probably be able to know or expect the harder or more difficult questions to be thrown your way. Do your homework up front. Prepare answers to those hard questions. That way you will look better in terms of being able to handle something that was difficult or awkward by giving an answer that was what or helped the person in terms of what they were looking for.

Slide 25 – The Final P – the Post-mortem

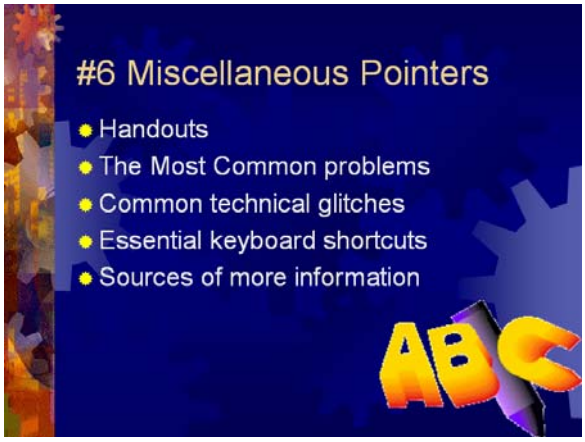
After the presentation is over, the fifth "P" is doing a post mortem. Ask yourself how did it go? Try to identify areas of improvement for the next time you do that presentation or perhaps a different presentation.

This is key for working to improve your presentation skills as you go forward. Improve your ability to deliver the key messages to your audience. Ideally, either formally or informally, get feedback from the attendees. What did they think about your presentation? What information really

came across well? What information did they really struggle with? Were there any unanswered questions in terms of what was presented?

Even if you are asked to give the same presentation again, use the post-mortem to address any points in the presentation where you were less effective. Update any topical references. Make sure that any statistics you use are timely.

Make it New.



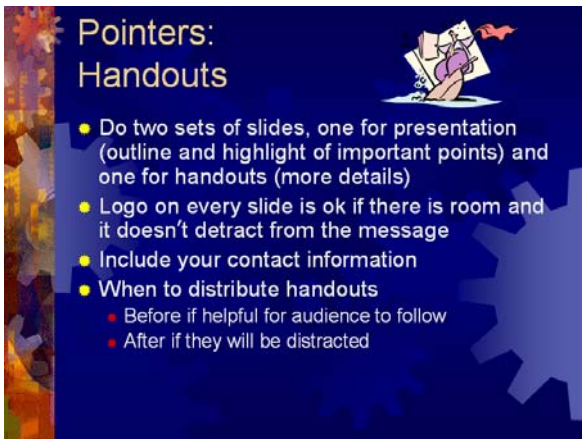
Slide 26 – Miscellaneous Pointers

We're going to move on now to five or so miscellaneous pointers, reviewing how you prepare handouts, review the most common problems we've seen in PowerPoint's, give some tips to solve the common technical glitches that presenters often face, quickly touch on some essential keyboard shortcuts and give you some sources of information on PowerPoint and how to succeed in doing presentations.

Slide 27 – Pointers: Handouts

First up, handouts. As we mentioned earlier, you should do two sets of slides or handouts. One will be used for the presentation. It should be in more an outline form, point form and highlight the important point. That's the one you use for your presentation. It can, if appropriate, also be used for your handout.

In most instances you probably want more detail in the handouts that you give to your audience. You should have a separate handout set that has more details. If a copy of the presentation and a separate written paper is appropriate, then that is what you should do.



Putting your firm name or logo on every slide is acceptable if there is room and it doesn't detract from the message. It should be relatively small and placed in a corner either at the top or at the bottom. It's a nice way to expose your brand or logo having it in front of your audience throughout the presentation, but again it shouldn't detract from it. Don't number your slides on each slide – as opposed to the handout – unless you are going to be referring to slide #, and certainly don't number them # of 100, because your audience will be justifiably fearful if you've got that big a deck.

Remember to always include full contact information, whether it's address, phone number, email, in your handout. That's how people will find the information that they will need to try and contact you after you've done your presentation.

Lastly, in dealing with handouts, there is a question of when do you distribute them. It depends on the audience and the content of the message you were delivering to the audience. If it is going to be helpful for the audience to have your presentation to follow along, say for instance, to look at graphs or charts, or to follow detailed lists of points, it is helpful to hand out beforehand, but maybe hand it to them just as they enter to hear your presentation rather than giving it to them beforehand because if they read it, they may decide not to attend.

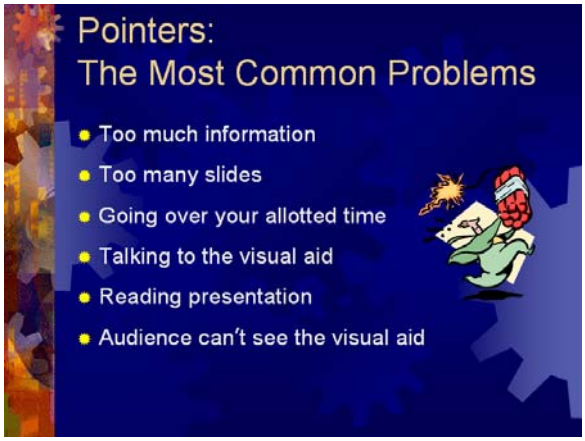
If you feel that having your handout will be distracting to the audience, keep them and distribute them after the presentation. That way you can have them focus in on you and your presentation as you are going through it.

If you are going to make your handouts available electronically, consider printing them into Adobe Acrobat format (also known as PDF), since you can ensure that everyone can see and print the handout as you want it to be seen. It also helps you to preserve copyright, since it is difficult to do much more than extract text or images – even then the security settings

Slide 28 – Pointers: The Most Common Problems

What are the most common problems, and we're sure you'll recognize many of these from presentations that you've been to, or even perhaps presentations that you've done yourself.

First of all, too much information and too many slides. This is a very common mistake and again it's particularly one that lawyers seem prone to. They want to cram in absolutely every single relevant piece of information, and they simply end up giving way too much information and going through it too quickly. That's not appropriate, it frustrates people and doesn't help you get your message across. Make sure you condense the information in your slides to that which is required. If you have too many slides, take out the extra ones. And identify in advance what are your essentials.



Pay attention to your allotted time slot. You should work to finish under your allotted time and leave a bit of time at the end for questions. There is nothing worse than getting ¾'s of the way through your presentation and then trying to do the last ¼ in the last 2 minutes while the MC or host is standing there looking over your shoulder trying to bump you off the stage to get to the next speaker. That looks very unprofessional.

Professional speakers know that a strong beginning, and strong ending can compensate for weakness in the middle. So make sure that you have worked out precisely how to end your presentation. The peroration should come with only 2 or 3 slides, and you should have prepared how to bridge to your conclusion from any stage. If the host is about to give you the hook, quickly

transition to your conclusion knowing that it is only going to take you 90 seconds or 2 minutes to end.

Next, don't talk to your visual aid. Don't face the screen. Remember you are there to present to your audience. Look at your audience. If you want to make a particular connection with information on the screen, or emphasize a certain point on the screen, walk over to it and point or information and that way you can highlight it but come back to your audience. Face the audience. That's why it's important to have either notes or an outline that you can hold and face the audience, or my personal preference is to have the computer in front of us so we can see it and look at the audience and they can look at the screen behind us.

Reading the text from your presentation slides is an absolute no-no. Your audience will have finished your lines long before you will have. At the very least paraphrase the words.

You should know your material cold. If it's that detailed that you have to read portions of it, that's fine, but it shouldn't be the majority of it.

Lastly, make sure your audience can see the visual aid, to see what is projected upon the screen. Walk to the back of the room before hand and make sure the image and the fonts are large enough, that the contrast is on the screen, that the screen is pointing in the right direction, that things like lecterns, desks etc aren't blocking the screen for people. You have to make sure the audience can see the content on the visual aids so that they can follow along the presentation with you.

Check out your busiest slide from the back of the room – if you can't read every word, scrap it.

Okay, you've found that given the lighting in the room, the slides are illegible – what do you do? In View, Masters, Slide Master, you have the chance to change the colour, size or character of the font. And once you have made that change on the master slide, it will carry throughout all the slides. One word of caution – it will not change any slides that have been done using the Title Master format.

Slide 29 – Pointers: Common Technical Glitches

What are the common technical glitches? These are things that very often frustrate people and in particular people who aren't familiar with the more advanced features of computers and PowerPoint.

First of all, you want to make sure that you turn off all the power management features on the computer that you are using for the presentation. These are the features that normally work as a screen saver or to save your battery and will either shut down your screen or shut down your computer after a certain period of inactivity. These should be all turned off or disabled prior to your presentation so that part way through your presentation, the computer doesn't shut down.

To do this, click on start, go to Control Panel, click on power options, and go in and make sure all management features are off.

Our next glitch in particular frustrates a lot of people and it's very easy to fix. Plugging in a projector to a computer is essentially the same as plugging in a monitor to a computer. The computer for all intents and purposes does not distinguish between a monitor and a projector, and it tries to do you a favour. When you've plug in the projector, it thinks a monitor is being plugged in and it assumes you want to look at the monitor, not the screen on the laptop, so it will turn that screen off.

Obviously if you are using your laptop for your presentation, and facing it towards the audience you will want to make sure that the image appears both on the screen through the projector and on the screen through your laptop. On your computer, press the Control key or another function key which will vary from computer to computer. It may be the F8 key or the F6 key. That will toggle the monitor and the projector on and off. It is actually on most computers, a three-way toggle. That is, it will switch between either having the monitor on, having the projector on or having both the monitor and the projector on. You just have to sit there and repeated hit the keys so that you can cycle through and get both the monitor and the projector on.

Check the battery in your remote if you are using the remote. Buttons on the remote tend to pressed as they are sitting in the bag with the projector, and you may find that batteries are dead or near dead when you take the remote out. Have an extra set of batteries.

Make it easily accessible so if your batteries do die in the middle of your presentation, you can switch them in the middle of your presentation and continue to use the remote. Make sure you are familiar with using the remote and understand what the various buttons do.

If you are using your own projector, that's great, you can get familiar with the remote. If you are using a projector and remote that you are unfamiliar with, spend a few extra minutes before the presentation to make sure you are familiar with it. Bring an extra bulb for your projector and any necessary tools that are required to change that bulb.

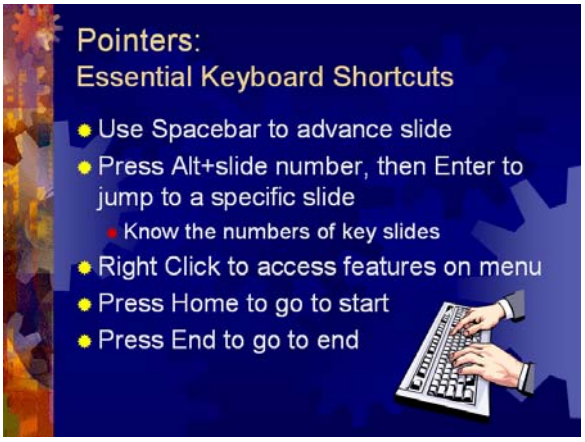
Lastly, assuming or preparing for problems with bulbs or projectors, consider bringing a back up of your presentation. Either on a disk or USB hub that you can put into someone else's computer or even on old-fashioned overheads which you can throw on an overhead projector. This can be a lifesaver if you have a very important presentation to do and you have technical difficulties that cannot otherwise be solved before you have to do your presentation.

Slide 30 – Pointers: Essential PowerPoint Keyboard Shortcuts

Moving on to some essential PowerPoint keyboard shortcuts. You should make sure you are very comfortable with the basics of navigating PowerPoint when you are doing a presentation. Again, it looks rather poor when someone gets up in front of an audience, and gets part way through their presentation and has difficulties.

One of the best keyboard shortcuts is using the Space Bar to advance to the next slide. Of course, you can use Page Down, however the Space Bar is a much larger target and it's easier to hit that if you are nervous or your hands are shaking, and that will help you get through the slides without hitting the wrong key.

Another neat keyboard shortcut is hitting the Alt key plus the one or two or three digits that represent a slide number and then hit Enter to jump to a specific slide. You should know the numbers of the key slides in your presentation, whether that means memorizing them or having an outline or a list in front of you.



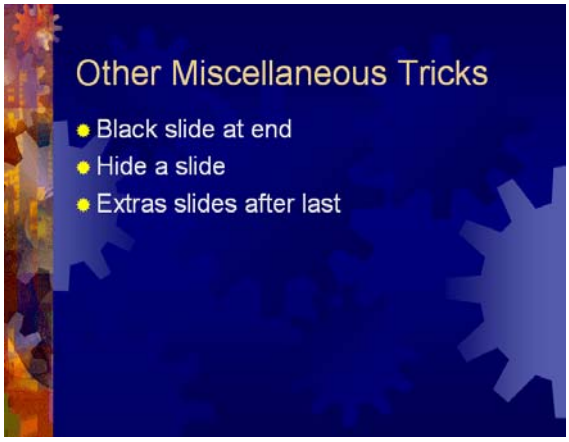
That way, if you get to a point in your presentation where there are questions, and you need to jump back to a key slide, you are able to go jump directly to that slide rather than Page Up or Page Down through multiple slides.

Remember to "right click" to access a number of features on the context menu. There are a number of interesting features there that you can access that may help you in doing your presentation and just to show a few of those to you now…if you right click, it pops up a menu that looks something like this. There are a number of options presented to you. If you select "Go" and then by title, there is listing of both slide numbers and titles for your presentation. You can then click on a particular slide and you will jump directly to it.

There are a number of settings for changing your pointer options. You can change your pointer to a pen and change colours of that pen and then draw circles on your slide to highlight.

If you want to jump to your opening slide, at the end of your presentation (in order to emphasize a point), you can press "Home" to jump to the very first slide in your presentation. If for some reasons you don't get to the end of your presentation, and you want to jump to the end, simply hitting the "End" key will jump you to the very end slide in your presentation.

Slide 31 – Other Miscellaneous Tricks



While PowerPoint has a feature that blacks out at the end of a presentation, we prefer to place a black slide at the start and at the end of a presentation. That way, we can actually have the presentation started while we are being introduced, but the audience simply sees the transition into the first slide with real content.

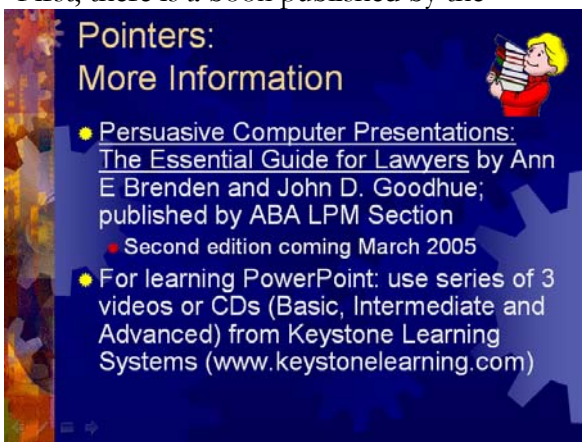
To get a black slide, select the format toolbar, Background, pick a black colour and be sure to check the Hide Background Graphics.

In Slide Outline View, the slides can be suppressed from being displayed by clicking the Hide Slide icon. We have found this trick invaluable when an earlier speaker cuts into our speaking time, and we have to cut a deck in half to fit our shorter time.

Finally, rather than completely delete slides whose content (either text or graphics) we may use later on, we move them right to the back of the deck, behind the Black Slide marking the end of the presentation, so that they are not inadvertently displayed.

Slide 32 – Pointers: More Information Resources

If you want more information on using PowerPoint and doing presentations, we can suggest two possible places or resources that you may be interested in. First, there is a book published by the American Bar Association, Law Practice Management Section, that is called "Persuasive Computer Presentations, The Essential Guide for Lawyers". It is an excellent book that includes a CD with a sample presentations. It will walk you through much of the same or similar information that we've gone through today, although in much more detail.



In particular, this book focuses in on using PowerPoint and other presentation software in the context of a courtroom… presenting to a judge or a jury, emphasizing your points etc.

If you want to learn more about using PowerPoint, we can suggest that you take a look at a series of three videotapes by a company called Keystone Learning Systems. Their web site is www.keystonelearning.com. There are three videos and three CD's as well. One is at the basic level, one is at the intermediate level and one is at the advanced level. They review everything from the very basics of starting up PowerPoint, to navigating the screen to getting into some of the more advance features of creating different slide layouts, colours and highlighting different items on a slide. They are available both on a videotape version, so you can plug a video into the VCR and watch it. If you do that, you should ideally have your computer so you can sit and work on your computer at the same time that you are watching the video. That way you can have hands-on practice of what is being shown to you on the video screen. They have also more recently come out with CD versions of this series. These you can obviously plug right into your computer and watch the demos right on your computer screen. Depending on what version of PowerPoint you use and depending on whether you want the videotape or CD version, the price for this series of three, ranges between $150 - $200. They are a great resource for learning how to use PowerPoint.

Finally three websites that you may find useful:

http://www.indezine.com/products/PowerPoint

http://www.PowerPointed.com/

http://www.PowerPointbackgrounds.com/

As we have mentioned earlier, PowerPoint has its critics – attending to what they see as the inherent weaknesses of PowerPoint will help you become master of this tool, rather than its slave. Have a look at the following top twenty sources, which will teach you much about graphic design and effective communication as they will about the mechanics of one Microsoft product:

1. Byrne, David, Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information, (2003)
2. Byrne, David, Learning to Love PowerPoint Wired 11.09, September 2003 at http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt1.html
3. Cleveland, W.S. The elements of graphing data. CRC Press. (1994)
4. Cleveland, W.S. Visualizing data. Hobart Press. (1993)
5. Halverson, Michael & Michael Young. Running Microsoft Office 2000 Professional. Redmond:Microsoft Press, 1999. ISBN 1-57231-936-4
6. Keller, Julia, "Is PowerPoint the Devil?", January 2003 SiliconValley.com
7. Mayer, Richard E., The Cognitive Load of PowerPoint: Q& A With Richard E. Mayer by Cliff Atkinson http://www.marketingprofs.com/4/atkinson10.asp
8. Mckenzie, J (2000) Scoring PowerPoints From Now on Vol 10, No 1, Sep 2000 at http://optin.iserver.net/fromnow/sept00/PowerPoints.html
9. Naughton, John, How PowerPoint can fatally weaken your argument, Observer. Sunday December 21, 2003 at http://observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4823803-102271,00.html
10. Norvig, Peter, "PowerPoint shot with its own bullets" August 2003
11. Norvig, PeterThe Gettysburg Address as PowerPoint http://www.norvig.com/Gettysburg/
12. Parker, Ian, Absolute PowerPoint, The New Yorker, May 28, 2001
13. Reese, R. Allan. "Graphical Literacy." Chance. Vol. 9, No. 3. 1996. pp 23-28.
14. Simons, Tad, Does PowerPoint Make You Stupid? By http://www.presentations.com/presentations/delivery/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000482464
15. Sutherland, A (2002)The Good, the bad and the rather unpleasant, TechDis presentation at http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/application.asp?section=generic&app=resources.asp&process=full_record&id=132
16. Tufte, Edward, PowerPoint is evil Wired 11.09, Sep 2003 at http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2.html
17. Tufte, Edward R., Envisioning Information. Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1990. ISBN 0-9613921-1-8
18. Tufte, Edward R., The Visual Display of Quantitative Information. Cheshire: Graphics Press, 2001. ISBN 0-9613921-4-2
19. Tufte, Edward R., Visual Explanations. Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1997. ISBN 0-9613921-2-6
20. Tufte, Edward R., The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint. Cheshire: Graphics Press, 2003. ISBN 0-9613921-5-0. Available for sale through Tufte's web site

http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/ and presented in the form of a PowerPoint presentation by Aaron Swartz at http://www.aaronsw.com/weblog/000931

Tufte's Critique

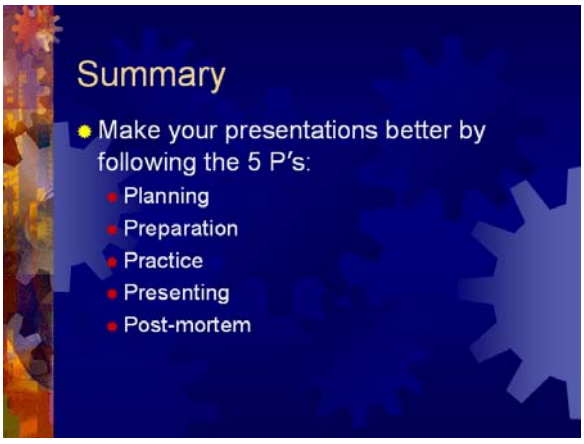
Tufte's fundamental critique is that PowerPoint is bad because it constricts thought and communication. It focuses on the presenter, rather than on the audience or content. PowerPoint is a program which is low resolution (in other words, it is not content-rich), it is deeply hierarchical, and is preoccupied with linear form. Tufte believes that bullets make us stupid, in the sense that they are too generic, that they omit relationships, complex and otherwise, between ideas, they simplify or even omit fundamental assumptions, and through the task of slimming down to meet a five or seven word requirement will omit subjects and verbs and become less effective in communicating ideas.

PowerPoint also assumes that knowledge is hierarchical, by imposing levels on ideas which may not fit comfortably into hierarchy may imply different levels that are in fact necessary. This may exaggerate truth. Tufte is also concerned about the density of information, pointing out that 50 PowerPoint slides contains roughly the same content as one page of the standard medical text, the physician's desk reference, and even that online PowerPoint has only a fifth of the content of popular websites. To use communications jargon, its virtually impossible to imagine a worse signal to noise ratio.

Ultimately, Tufte's message to all speakers is to focus on your message, ensure that your content is as tight as possible, to provide written handouts, and to avoid useless slides that say nothing.

Slide 33 – Summary

In summary, we hope that after having heard our presentation, you will be able to make your presentations better by following the five P's. That will help you plan and prepare the presentations beforehand; practicing them, it will help to ensure they are tailored to the audience you are presenting to. It will help to ensure that you are presenting appropriate content to that audience and it will make sure that you are giving them good handouts that further deliver and emphasize your key points. It should help you understand how you can deliver more strong and positive presentations, and taking a look afterwards at your presentation to see where your shortcomings were and to make improvements for the next time you do that presentation or another presentation.



Remember, communication skills have always been at the heart of successful lawyering – paying attention to the fundamentals of communication theory and having PowerPoint decks that enhance your message will be key to your success in the future.

The Canadian Law of PowerPoint

There is very little formal Canadian law on the use of PowerPoint, but it would generally be governed by the rules applicable to demonstrative evidence. Some very recent cases show how it may be used.

Canadian courts are becoming more open to the use of PowerPoint. In *R. v. Paul*[1], Trafford J. permitted PowerPoint slides to be included in material going to a jury. "PowerPoint, properly used, can be an effective tool to ass ist sthe jury in understanding the opening."[2]

An application for a mistrial on the basis of PowerPoint used by a party in an opening was recently rejected in British Columbia.[3] While the use of PowerPoint in a trial is commendable, it does not justify an increase in costs[4]

Ten Tips to Presentations

1. Think about alternatives. Do you have to use PowerPoint to make your point. If you do, do you have a Plan B for power cuts or equipment failure.

2. Give slides a rest. Blank the screen and give your audience relief from the slides.

3. Use restraint. Flash can be fun. But overly flashy can be unprofessional.

4. Parrots bore. Don't read your slides. They should complement what you say. You're not an echo.

5. Master the slide master. If you have to make fast changes because of legibility or glare from sunshine, changing the master can be done in seconds.

6. Edit. Ruthlessly.

7. Rehearse. Time yourself. Practice moving through the slides forward and back. Attend to transitions.

8. Put yourself in the audience's shoes. What are their needs and concerns? Have you helped them solve their problem? At the very least, go to the back of the room where you're presenting and check whether you can read all of your slides.

9. Keep it simple. One theme per slide. Don't crowd text. Don't have too many slides. Over one a minute and you're speeding.

10. Start with the end in mind. Go to the important points first. Don't bury key information at the bottom of a slide or deck.

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[1] 2004 Canlii 12949 Ont SC
[2] *Schram v. Osten* 2004 BCSC 1789 (Canlii)
[3] Ibid.
[4] *To v. Toronto Board of Education* 2001 Canlii 11304 (OntCA)

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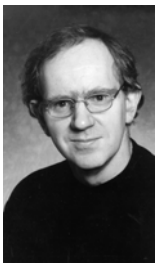

Heenan Blaikie LLP

We've given earlier versions of this presentation seven times to audiences in three countries . If you would like us to present this material to your group, let one of us know at the contact information on page 2